

City-Parish Council takes next step on proposed Lafayette development code

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The City-Parish Council on Tuesday moved forward with the first major overhaul of Lafayette's development regulations in decades.

The council voted unanimously to introduce the proposed **Unified Development Code**, making only few changes to what city-parish staff presented.

A final vote is set for May 5.

The proposed code is an outgrowth of a broad **comprehensive plan** for future growth and development that city-parish officials crafted last year after months of public forums and workshops.

The proposed UDC streamlines a litany of existing codes, with the goal of making it easier for developers to navigate city-parish regulations and permitting requirements.

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It also could shape the character of the city.

The new regulations would make it easier to build dense, mixed-use projects that bring together homes, apartments, offices and businesses.

The proposed code also calls for new streets to be narrower and sidewalks wider in some areas, with the goal of slowing traffic and making it safer and easier to walk.

Developers would sometimes be allowed to build on smaller lots, which could open the door for so-called “infill” projects in the city’s core.

“The things we say we want, let’s make them easy to do,” City-Parish Chief Development Officer Carlee Alm-LaBar said.

The most obvious and immediate change would be in zoning. The UDC would rezone the entire city, replacing the 18 classifications with 12 new ones.

Residential areas would generally remain residential and commercial would remain commercial, but the transition is a bit more complicated in some parts of the city.

Property owners who object to the new classification of their property would have a chance to dispute the change.

The only extensive debate at Tuesday’s meeting was on a proposal to raise from \$100 to \$1,500 the fee required to seek council appeal of decisions made the City-Parish

Planning Commission, which generally must approve the plans for major commercial and residential developments.

City-parish staff have argued the current \$100 fee does not cover the roughly \$1,000 in expenses for the documentation and staff hours needed to process appeals.

City-Parish Council Chairman Kenneth Boudreaux said he fears a \$1,500 fee might discourage residents from bringing legitimate challenges.

Boudreaux pushed a successful amendment to set the appeal fee under the proposed UDC to \$500.

The council opted against an amendment by Councilman William Theriot to set the fee at \$250.

Boudreaux said he is seeking other changes, including tweaking the new zoning map to keep more areas where only single-family homes are allowed. He said the proposed zoning changes might open the door too wide for apartments or businesses in some areas.

“What I’m looking to do is create more of a buffer,” he said.